ROMANTIC TENDENCIES IN THE WORKS OF DRYDEN, ADDISON, AND POPE

A Portion of

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY IN CONFORMITY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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SAMUEL WHITEFIELD STEVENSON

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SUMMARY

This study has concerned itself with those opinions, preferences, and literary characteristics of Dryden, Addison, and Pope that have seemed to be in sympathy with the spirit of the mediæval and renaissance periods of English literature, that have seemed to question or oppose the doctrines and attitudes generally supposed to be typical of the Enlightenment, and that have seemed to anticipate the more important positions taken by the writers of the later period generally called romantic. The section devoted to Dryden has been limited to a consideration of his dramas and his prose works and has noted his dependence upon dramatic tradition derived from the pre-Commonwealth stage, the individualistic and emotional content of his dramas, and the disregard of rigid formalism in his critical utterances. The division in which Addison is treated places particular emphasis upon the surprising number of instances in which he anticipates the literary tendencies of the following century. A detailed enumeration of these anticipations may be found in the last few pages of that section. The division that treats of Pope seeks to trace the survival of tendencies that arose from a childhood spent amid an environment conducive to " romantic " impulses. These survivals are noted as they are manifested in Pope's attitude toward literature, external nature, and life.

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"ROMANTIC" TENDENCIES IN POPE

By SAMUEL W. STEVENSON

The circumstances amid which Alexander Pope spent his childhood strike a note discordant with the tone of his mature poetic productions. Yet, underneath the more obvious discord one may often note strains that blend harmoniously with the earlier chords. To one acquainted with the facts, it is almost self-evident that Pope's early environment was not of a nature calculated to develop the great poet of neo-classicism. The influences that were to form this poet came later, and they were successful in remoulding him nearer to the neo-classic heart's desire. Yet the effects of the initial formative period were never wholly to disappear; subordinated they might be, but never obliterated. Thus it is that the study of Pope, the romanticist, must be largely a study of possibilities and of tendencies, real enough in themselves, but subordinated generally in the recordings of his poetic genius.

As described by Sir Leslie Stephen, Binfield, the early home of the poet,

> is near Bracknell, one of Shelley's brief perching places, and in such a region as poets might love, if poetic praises of rustic seclusion are to be taken seriously. To the east were the 'forests and green retreats' of Windsor; and the wild heaths of Bagshot, Chobham, and Aldershot stretched for miles to the south. Some twelve miles off in that direction . . . lay Moor Park, where the sturdy pedestrian, Swift, was living with Sir W. Temple during great part of Pope's childhood. . . .[1]

Here it was that Pope acquired the permanent and sincere appreciation of the charms of "rustic seclusion."

Among the influences to which he was less passive and unconscious than to the beauties of heath and forest, we may note the reading matter which engaged the embryonic poet:

> When I had done with my priests, I took to reading by myself, for which I had a very great eagerness and enthusiasm, especially for poetry: and in a few years I had dipped into a great number of the English, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek poets. This I did without any design, but that of pleasing myself: and got the languages, by hunting after the stories in the several poets I read;

[1] Leslie Stephen, *Alexander Pope*, "English Men of Letters" series, p. 2.

rather than read the books to get the languages. I followed everywhere as my fancy led me, and was like a boy gathering flowers in the fields and woods, just as they fall in his way.—These five or six years I still look upon as the happiest part of my life.[2]

When we remember that this course of reading began when Pope was about twelve years of age, we are reminded that it was a substitute for the usual school-life of the English boy of this period. His acquaintance and association with youthful companions was, therefore, rather scanty. Finally, it is to be noted that young Pope was from the start " a domestic idol. He was not an only child. . . . But he was the only child of his mother, and his parents concentrated upon him an affection which he returned with touching ardour and persistence." [3]

Here, indeed, was a foundation admirably fitted to support the most romantic tendencies. The romantic attitude toward nature, toward literature, and toward life was fostered by these circumstances.

When, during the years of childhood and adolescence, one reads widely, eagerly, promiscuously, " like a boy gathering flowers in the fields and woods, just as they fall in his way," such reading must evidently express and stimulate romantic and disorderly tastes; and when the lure of indiscriminate beauties and the fascination of " the stories " are made more important and more real by the comparative lack of boyhood associates, we have good reason to postulate for Pope a sort of dream world, peopled by imaginary beings, stirred by imaginary events, and vivified by the forces of unrestrained feeling and affections that are almost inevitably cultivated in a young and favored child.

Obviously this environment and this mode of life, with the intellectual and emotional attitudes that they fostered, were doomed to serious interruptions. Since young Pope possessed talent, it was only a matter of time until this intensive literary apprenticeship should force him into contact with a world of actuality that must, because of its peculiar nature, offer violent and forceful opposition to a glamorous and emotional world, half real, half imaginary.

[2] Spence, *Anecdotes*, ed. S. W. Singer (London, 1858), p. 148. All references, hereafter designated " Sp," are to this edition.

[3] Stephen, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

By these new influences was fashioned the neo-classic poet. The process was gradual, of course, and its exact beginning can hardly be indicated. Perhaps it was the recommendation made by Walsh (whose judgment the great Dryden had approved by calling him "without flattery . . . the best critic of our nation")[4] that Pope should make correctness his chief aim, since no English poet had ever combined the qualities of greatness and correctness (Sp, p. 212). However this may be, we may plainly see various subsequent steps in the metamorphosis. One of the early influences was Pope's contact with the elderly Wycherly, who delighted to emphasize his "manly" realism by assuming the name of "the Plain Dealer." Painful lessons in the folly of wearing one's heart upon one's sleeve were acquired when Pope imprudently ventured too far in his romantic attachments to Martha Blount and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Among the ever-present and incalculable forces that impelled him toward the acceptance of "classicism" in its multifarious aspects, may be mentioned the friendship with Dean Swift, which encouraged a perhaps natural inclination toward satirical expression, and that with Lord Bolingbroke, which certainly contributed largely to Pope's subsequent rational, didactic, and philosophic productions.

That Pope proved unusually malleable in the grip of these contemporary forces cannot be denied, but a feeling persists that this was due to his remarkable adaptability rather than to his natural conformity. One cannot deny that the earlier romantic growth was natural, unforced, pursuant of its own natural bent, whereas nearly all manifestations of the neo-classic ideal may be definitely attributed to the forcing process, or at least encouragement, of outward circumstance. I take the prolonged and persistent indications of the earlier romantic attitude to signify that it was real and not superficial, and the following pages represent an attempt to trace the continuance of this romantic attitude toward literature.

"Homer . . . was the first author that made me catch the itch of poetry, when I read him in my childhood . . ." wrote Pope to Broome on June 16, 1715.[5] We are sure that the fiery

[4] *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. Ker, 2. 244.

[5] *Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. Elwin Courthope, 8. 37. Unless otherwise specified, all citations from Pope are from this edition, referred to as "EC."

exploits of the *Iliad* were among the first poetic attractions to engage the attention of the young poet, and also that they made a tremendous impression upon him. Pope informed Spence (p. 209), "When I was about twelve, I wrote a kind of play, which I got to be acted by my schoolfellows. It was a number of speeches from the Iliad; tacked together with verses of my own." We have also (Sp, pp. 209, 211) some of the details concerning another of these youthful productions. "The epic poem which I begun a little after I was twelve, was Alcander, prince of Rhodes: there was an under-water scene in the first book, it was in the Archipelago." "Alcander showed all the virtue of suffering, like Ulysses; and of courage, like Æneas, or Achilles. . . . [Cybele] raises a storm against him in the first book, as Juno does against Æneas; and he is cast away and swims ashore, just as Ulysses does to the island of Phæacia." In other words, with its underwater scene and its hero showing "all the virtue of suffering . . . and of courage," despite its debt to the Ancients, it was probably about as colorful and brisk as a boyish and undisciplined imagination could make it.

From Spence (pp. 225, 146) we get other clues to the early literary taste of the poet. He quotes Pope as follows: "I read the Faerie Queene, when I was about twelve, with infinite delight. . . ." And again: "In these rambles of mine through the poets; when I met with a passage, or story, that pleased me more than ordinary, I used to endeavour to imitate it, or translate it into English; and this gave rise to my Imitations published so long after."

From this evidence and from his early "translations," we may therefore compile an authentic (if incomplete) list of poems that particularly appealed to Pope: the *Iliad* of Homer, the *Thebais* of Statius, the *Epistles* and *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Hous of Fame* of Chaucer, and the *Faerie Queene* of Spenser. There is scarcely an item in this list that does not give evidence of a thoroughly "romantic" taste. It is scarcely necessary to mention the fire and impetuosity of Homer's style; or the wrath, revenge, self-assertion, stirring combats, and glorified adventure of the *Iliad*. Pope himself describes the subject matter of the *Thebais* (*Thebais* 1. ll. 51-60):

Of furious hate surviving death, she sings,
A fatal throne to two contending kings,
And fun'eral flames that, parting wide in air,
Express the discord of the souls they bear:
Of towns dispeopled, and the wand'ring ghosts
Of kings unburied in the wasted coasts;
When Dirce's fountain blushed with Grecian blood,
And Thetis, near Ismenos' swelling flood,
With dread beheld the rolling surges sweep,
In heaps, his slaughtered sons into the deep.

Pope told Spence that he was chiefly concerned in his early readings with "hunting for the story," a trait that in itself argues a romantic taste. If the "story" just summarized is one that seemed to him peculiarly attractive (and we have his own words to support this assumption), Pope was at this time in a fair way to become a headlong romanticist.[6]

From what may roughly be termed the spectacular, the adventurous, and the direful (as represented by Homer and Statius), we pass to another phase of Pope's early literary tastes, his interest in Ovid. Here are found the elements of emotion, sentiment, and enchantment.

Love taught my tears in sadder notes to flow,

sang Sappho (*Sappho to Phaon*, l. 7), as interpreted by Ovid and by Pope. In his translation Pope makes no attempt to minimize the importance of the emotional experience involved (ll. 51-2)—

No time the dear remembrance can remove,
For oh! how vast a memory has love?

Other passages (ll. 59-62, 139-160) give definite evidence of Pope's imaginative sympathy with the sensuous and emotional abandonment of the lovers.

Then with each word, each glance, each motion fired,
You still enjoyed, and yet you still desired,
Till all dissolving in the trance we lay,
And in tumultuous raptures died away.

[6] Stylistic matters may also have made up some part of the attraction of Statius for Pope. For descriptions of romantic qualities in the style of Statius see Joseph Warton, *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (fifth edition, 1806), 2. 20-1; Thomas Warton, *History of English Poetry* (1804), 2. 197.

Stung with my love, and furious with despair,
All torn my garments and my bosom bare,
My woes, thy crimes, I to the world proclaim;
Such inconsistent things are love and shame!

'Tis thou art all my care and my delight,
My daily longing, and my dream by night:
Oh night more pleasing than the brightest day,
When fancy gives what absence takes away,
And, dressed in all its visionary charms,
Restores my fair deserter to my arms!
Then round your neck in wanton wreaths I twine,
Then you, methinks, as fondly circle mine:
A thousand tender words I hear and speak;
A thousand melting kisses give, and take:
Then fiercer joys, I blush to mention these,
Yet, while I blush, confess how much they please.
But when, with day, the sweet delusions fly,
And all things wake to life and joy, but I,
As if once more forsaken, I complain,
And close my eyes to dream of you again:
Then frantic rise, and like some fury rove
Through lonely plains, and through the silent grove. . . .

Pope's " translations " from the *Canterbury Tales* bring to our attention other literary peculiarities that were out of tune with the politeness and refinement of the Enlightenment. It is to be noted particularly that Pope was, during the period of his early reading, cultivating an acquaintance with the great English representative of mediæval literature, and that this fascination was apparently due to poetic qualities neglected or frowned upon by orthodox Augustans. On the basis of decorum Dryden had refrained, perhaps a bit regretfully, from modernizing the " Wife of Bath's Prologue " and the " Merchant's Tale." But to the youthful Pope the spiciness and racy qualities of these selections were much more important than decorum. He translated them, thereby confessing his particular delight in their attractions. One of Pope's deviations from his original is worthy of attention. Chaucer, in the " Merchant's Tale," had described the garden of the knight as the reputed haunt of Pluto, Proserpine, and their attendants. Pope's more romantic inclinations led him to substitute elves and fairies (*January and May*, ll. 459-64):

About this spring, if ancient fame say true,
The dapper elves their moon-light sports pursue:
Their pigmy king, and little fairy queen,
In circling dances gambolled on the green,
While tuneful sprites a merry concert made,
And airy music warbled through the shade.

If the suggested nature of Pope's youthful literary inclinations remain in doubt, his adaptation of Chaucer's *Hous of Fame* should dispel all uncertainty. Pope's own note (EC 1. 205) to line fifty-three of his version is much more convincing as a confession of these inclinations than as an attempt to reconcile the highly colored elements of his poem to prevailing literary standards:

Though a strict verisimilitude be not required in the descriptions of this visionary and allegorical kind of poetry, which admits of every wild object that fancy may present in a dream, and where it is sufficient if the moral meaning atone for the improbability, yet men are naturally so desirous of truth that a reader is generally pleased, in such a case, with some excuse or allusion that seems to reconcile the description to probability and nature. The simile here is of that sort. . . .

These remarks relate to Pope's description of the rock upon which stands the House of Fame. Here is Chaucer's description of it (3. ll. 34-40):

But hit was lyk a thing of glas,
But that hit shoon ful more clere;
But of what congeled matere
Hit was, I niste redely.
But at the laste espyed I,
And found that hit was, every deel,
A roche of Yse, and not of steel.

This was entirely too tame for Pope. In his hands it became the following (*Temple of Fame,* ll. 53-60):

So Zembla's rocks (the beauteous work of frost)
Rise white in air, and glitter o'er the coast;
Pale suns, unfelt, at distance roll away,
And on th' impassive ice the lightnings play;
Eternal snows the growing mass supply,
Till the bright mountains prop th' incumbent sky:
As Atlas fixed, each hoary pile appears,
The gathered winter of a thousand years.

Probability indicates that Zembla's rocks were introduced to serve the purposes of ornamentation rather than of verisimilitude.

Pope continues to indulge his partiality for richness and ornamentation. He supplies the edifice (l. 67) with

> Four Brazen gates, on columns lifted high,

and upon the walls (l. 69) are inscribed figures of "fabled chiefs in darker ages born." The eastern front (ll. 93-106) depicts a fusion of "barbaric pearl and gold" and mystic rites and enchantments:

> The Eastern front was glorious to behold,
> With di'mond flaming and barbaric gold.
> There Ninus shone, who spread th' Assyrian fame,
> And the great founder of the Persian name:
> There in long robes the royal Magi stand,
> Grave Zoroaster waves the circling wand,
> The sage Chaldæans, robed in white, appeared,
> And Brachmans, deep in desert woods revered.
> These stopped the moon, and called th' unbodied shades
> To midnight banquets in the glimm'ring glades;
> Made visionary fabrics round them rise,
> And airy spectres skim before their eyes;
> Of talismans and sigils knew the pow'r,
> And careful watched the planetary hour.[7]

The southern front (ll. 109-118) falls little short of the eastern in barbaric splendor and processional pageantry:

> But on the South, a long majestic race
> Of Egypt's priests the gilded niches grace,
> Who measured earth, described the starry spheres,
> And traced the long records of lunar years.
> High on his car, Sesostris struck my view,
> Whom sceptered slaves in golden harness drew:
> His hands a bow and pointed jav'lin hold;
> His giant limbs are armed in scales of gold.
> Between the statues obelisks were placed,
> And the learn'd walls with hieroglyphics graced.

The description of the northern side (ll. 119-144) continues in the same vein:

[7] After this romantic indulgence Pope bows to the "classicists" in his next couplet (ll. 107-8):

> Superior, and alone, Confucius stood,
> Who taught that useful science, to be good.

Of Gothic structure was the Northern side,
O'erwrought with ornaments of barb'rous pride:
There huge Colosses rose, with trophies crowned,
And Runic characters were graved around.
There sat Zamolxis with erected eyes,
And Odin here in mimic trances dies.
There on rude iron columns, smeared with blood,
The horrid forms of Scythian heroes stood,
Druids and bards (their once loud harps unstrung),
And youths that died to be by poets sung.
These, and a thousand more, of doubtful fame,
To whom old fables gave a lasting name,
In ranks adorned the temple's outward face;
The wall in lustre and effect like glass,
Which o'er each object casting various dyes,
Enlarges some, and others multiplies:
Nor void of emblem was the mystic wall,
For thus romantic Fame increases all.
The temple shakes, the sounding gates unfold,
Wide vaults appear, and roofs of fretted gold:
Raised on a thousand pillars, wreathed around
With laurel-foliage, and with eagles crowned:
Of bright transparent beryl were the walls,
The friezes gold, and gold the capitals:
As heav'n with stars, the roof with jewels glows,
And ever-living lamps depend in rows.

Pope's mania for elaboration and richness may be seen by a comparison with his original. Instead of the four highly wrought gates that he has described, Chaucer has furnished the palace with only one, which he describes as follows (3. ll. 209-216):

Hit nedeth noght you for to tellen,
To make you to longe dwellen,
Of this yates florisshinges,
Ne of compasses, ne of Kervinges,
Ne how they hatte in masoneries,
As corbets fulle of imageries.
But, lord! so fair hit was to shewe,
For hit was al with gold behewe.

Pope's passages, with their intended splendor and with the frequent introduction of sonorous names, such as Zoroaster, Zamolxis, and Sesostris, are suggestive of the effects that Milton could so masterfully evoke. Other passages are more suggestive of the richly sensuous nature of Keats (ll. 248-57):

Full in the midst proud Fame's imperial seat
With jewels blazed, magnificently great;
The vivid em'ralds there revive the eye,
The flaming rubies show their sanguine dye,
Bright azure rays from lively sapphires stream,
And lucid amber casts a golden gleam.
With various-coloured lights the pavement shone,
And all on fire appeared the glowing throne;
The dome's high arch reflects the mingled blaze,
And forms a rainbow of alternate rays.

And again (ll. 314-17):

At ev'ry breath were balmy odours shed,
Which still grew sweeter as they wider spread;
Less fragrant scents th' unfolding rose exhales,
Or spices breathing in Arabian gales.

Finally, Pope's tributes to Homer and Pindar should be noted. It is not surprising that he should honor these poets, but the " brave neglect " and the " irregularly great " effects for which they are commended (ll. 182, 188, 192-5, 212-21) do not at all suggest a rigid classicism.

High on the first, the mighty Homer shone . . .
The wars of Troy were round the pillar seen . . .
Motion and life did ev'ry part inspire,
Bold was the work, and proved the master's fire;
A strong expression most he seemed t' affect,
And here and there disclosed a brave neglect.

Here, like some furious prophet, Pindar rode,
And seem'd to labour with th' inspiring god.
Across the harp a careless hand he flings,
And boldly sinks into the sounding strings.
The figured games of Greece the column grace,
Neptune and Jove survey the rapid race.
The youths hang o'er the chariots as they run;
The fiery steeds seem starting from the stone;
The champions in distorted postures threat,
And all appeared irregularly great.

It is to be remarked that Pope, in the selections cited, was not merely reproducing the words of Chaucer in modern English. The wealth of luscious detail and profuse ornamentation is largely his own, developed from little more than hints in the original.

Considering the nature of most of Pope's mature poetic pro-

ductions, few things in English literary history appear more surprising than that Spenser was one of Pope's poetic heroes. But in this, Pope's earlier world of poesy, he fits without incongruity. Pope's preferences that have been previously noted give ample assurance that his reaction to the chivalric and sensuous elements of the *Faerie Queene* would be favorable. His "Imitation" of Spenser is too much in the burlesque vein to indicate serious emulation, but *The Alley* does suggest the author's desire for an accentuated sordidness that is the logical complement of the proclivity toward accentuated ornament that he displayed in the *Temple of Fame*.

Spenser's influence is again seen in Pope's pastorals, and here, too, is seen our first clear indication (if we ignore the doubtful significance of an early partiality for Waller and Dryden) of the remoulding forces of classicism. It was Pope's pastorals that first brought him into contact with Walsh, who advised so effectively that the poet should aim at "correctness." Pope originally intended that his pastorals should be presented to the world as imitations of Spenser, but whether or not the influence of Walsh was responsible, he later decided to attribute their inspiration to Virgil and Theocritus. The following passage from his manuscript was omitted by Pope from his published "Discourse on Pastoral Poetry." Speaking of the *Shepherd's Calendar* he says,

> It was hence I took my first design of the following eclogues. For, looking upon Spenser as the father of English pastoral, I thought myself unworthy to be esteemed even the meanest of his sons, unless I bore some resemblance of him. But, as it happens with degenerate offspring, not only to recede from the virtues, but to dwindle from the bulk of their ancestors; so I have copied Spenser in miniature, and reduced his twelve months into four seasons.[8]

Walsh's contribution to the correctness of Pope has been noted. Other details of Pope's apprenticeship to him are revealed in their correspondence of this period.

> I am convinced, as well as you, that one may correct too much; for in poetry, as in painting, a man may lay colours one upon another till they stiffen and deaden the piece. Besides, to bestow heightening on every part is monstrous: some parts ought to be lower than the rest; and nothing looks more ridiculous than a work

[8] Quoted by Elwin, EC 1. 264 note.

where the thoughts, however different in their own nature, seem all on a level: it is like a meadow newly mown, where weeds, grass, and flowers, are all laid even, and appear undistinguished. I believe, too, that sometimes our first thoughts are the best, as the first squeezing of the grapes makes the finest and richest wine.[9]

From this one gathers that Pope's first conception of the recommended correctings was that they consisted in heaping ornament upon ornament. It is not strange that Walsh should think the excesses of this process undesirable. His chaste admonitions were soon to bear abundant fruit, but as yet his pupil was prone to interpret them in terms of his own romantic proclivities. Note how Pope has evolved from Walsh's sermon a confirmation of the inspirational and spontaneous origin of poetry: " I believe, too, that sometimes our first thoughts are the best, as the first squeezing of the grapes makes the finest and richest wine."

The *Messiah* marks an advance in the process of Pope's poetic refinement. The youthful " barbarity " and the cultivated " politeness " each achieve a place in this production. Its brief preface informs the reader (EC 1. 303), " In reading several passages of the Prophet Isaiah, which foretell the coming of Christ and the felicities attending it, I could not but observe a remarkable parity between many of the thoughts, and those in the Pollio of Virgil." Pope acknowledges Virgil as his stylistic model and Isaiah as the source of his thoughts, and adds (*ibid.*) that the reader may " see how far the images and descriptions of the prophet are superior to those of the poet." Pope was perfectly willing to tailor Isaiah out in the most impeccable of formal attire, but it must not be forgotten that he was attracted by the impassioned and sublime idiom and imagery of the Old Testament and that he described the prophet in all the romantic regalia of the primitive and enthusiastic bard (*Messiah,* ll. 5-8):

> O Thou my voice inspire
> Who touched Isaiah's hallowed lips with fire!
> Rapt into future times, the bard begun:
> A virgin shall conceive, a virgin bear a son!

The closing lines of the poem, beginning with

> Rise, crown'd with light, imperial Salem, rise!

[9] Pope to Walsh, July 2, 1706; EC 6. 51.

give evidence that Pope had not entirely failed to assimilate the ecstatic and impassioned qualities of his original.

Windsor Forest again presents a contrast between form and content. It was modeled upon the polite and approved pattern of Denham's *Cooper's Hill* and could be placed without opposition among those poems that are indisputably neo-classic; yet no less an authority than Wordsworth has said that aside from the verses of Lady Winchelsea, it contains the only new images of external nature to be found in English poetry between *Paradise Lost* and the *Seasons*, a rather remarkable distinction; and this distinction may be traced directly to the copious source of nearly all the poet's unorthodox tendencies, his early habits and surroundings.

By this time (*c.* 1712) Pope had assimilated much of the literary doctrine and not a little of the taste that were so typical of the time and so foreign to his youthful tendencies. Accordingly we see him embarking on another literary venture thoroughly typical of the period, the verse essay. In the school of classicism Pope had been a tractable pupil, despite the fact that there had been much for him to learn and unlearn. The *Essay on Criticism* bears witness to the stubborn survival of early instincts. The neo-classic qualities of this production may be here ignored, not because they are unimportant or doubtful, but because they are universally recognized. The more unorthodox features of the poem are usually overlooked. We need to be reminded, for one thing, that Pope violated the current literary ideals by neglecting to give his poem a definite pattern. He was not slow to seize upon Horace for a precedent for this antipathy to carefully wrought structure. He "spoke of it always, as an 'irregular collection of thoughts thrown together as they offered themselves, as Horace's Art of Poetry was, and written in imitation of that irregularity,' which he even admired, and said was beautiful." [10]

Of greater importance is Pope's propensity to seize upon and emphasize any neo-classic critical concessions that fell in his way. The rule-of-thumb methods advanced by critics are scored (ll. 114-15):

> Some dryly plain, without invention's aid,
> Write dull receipts how poems may be made. . . .

[10] Richardson, quoted by Elwin, EC 2. 261.

The same methods utilized by "poets" result just as fatally (ll. 239-42):

> But in such lays as neither ebb nor flow,
> Correctly cold, and regularly low,
> That, shunning faults, one quiet tenour keep,
> We cannot blame indeed, but we may sleep.

Nor does Pope content himself with pointing out that correctness and regularity may sometimes fail to accomplish poetic felicity. He contends that this felicity may be gained at the expense of correctness and regularity (ll. 141-57):

> Some beauties yet no precepts can declare,
> For there's a happiness as well as care.
> Music resembles poetry; in each
> Are nameless graces which no methods teach,
> And which a master hand alone can reach.
> If, where the rules not far enough extend,
> (Since rules were made but to promote their end,)
> Some lucky licence answer to the full
> Th' intent proposed, that licence is a rule.
> Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
> May boldly deviate from the common track.
> Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
> And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;
> From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
> And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
> Which, without passing through the judgment, gains
> The heart, and all its end at once attains.

Poetry's essential appeal to the heart rather than to the head, which Pope has noted in the last couplet of the selection just given, is emphasized repeatedly (ll. 235-6):

> Survey the whole, nor seek slight faults to find
> Where nature moves, and *rapture warms the mind*. . . .[11]

"Mind" is obviously used here for the sole purpose of securing a suitable rhyme. It is the *rapture* that Pope wishes to emphasize, as is the case in the following passage (ll. 195-98):

> O may some spark of your celestial fire,
> The last, the meanest of your sons inspire,
> (That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights;
> Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes,). . . .

[11] Italics are mine.

These opinions are again expressed in the *Imitations of Horace* ("To Augustus," ll. 340-47):

> Let me for once presume t' instruct the times,
> To know the Poet from the man of rhymes:
> 'Tis he who gives my breast a thousand pains,
> Can make me feel each passion that he feigns;
> Enrage, compose, with more than magic art,
> With pity, and with terror, tear my heart;
> And snatch me o'er the earth, or through the air,
> To Thebes, to Athens, when he will, and where.[12]

Finally, we may note that Pope is prone to admire in poetry the impressive, the irregular, the uncommon; such qualities as he wishes to suggest by the natural objects mentioned in the following lines (*Essay on Criticism*, ll. 158-60):

> In prospects, thus, some objects please our eyes,
> Which out of nature's common order rise,
> The shapeless rock, or hanging precipice.

The passage just quoted indicates clearly Pope's interest in the wilder and less ordered aspects of Nature, a topic that shall not be enlarged upon here, but instances of his interest in Nature as related to literature may be pertinently noted. Such an instance is found in one of his letters of this period to Caryll. Pope wrote that the severity of the cold had turned his attention to "descriptions of the Arctic regions, Lapland, Nova Zembla, and Spitzberg." In reality, he had probably been indulging in the fascinations of books of travel. However that may be, his discussion was extended to include citations of "several beautiful winter pieces of the poets." He remarks that "Mr. Philips has two lines, which seem to me what the French call very *picturesque*, that I cannot omit to you."

> "All hid in snow, in bright confusion lie,
> And with one dazzling waste fatigue the eye."[13]

What is unusual here is Pope's assumption that poetry is a legitimate medium of expression for the charm of the *picturesque* aspect of Nature, and his obvious appreciation of the

[12] Pope here follows Horace closely, but in view of his frequent deviations from his original there is no reason to suppose these lines do not express the sentiments of Pope himself.

[13] Pope to Caryll, Dec. 21, 1712, EC 6. 178.

wintry beauties that were generally ignored by his fellow-classicists.

There is perhaps in all literature no example of a happier compromise between attitudes usually antagonistic than is the *Rape of the Lock*. In this poem Pope has reconciled without the slightest incongruity his acquired classicism and his native luxuriance. It represents the best traditions of the Enlightenment in its satirical, sophisticated, polite, and gently corrective reproduction of the follies of the social realm; but it also achieves a degree of ornamentation, high coloring, and fanciful elaboration that must have delighted the still-surviving instincts of the less restrained side of his poetic nature.[14]

A minute inventory of all the " gauze and silver spangles " cannot be given here, but the supernatural ingredients may be briefly considered. We have seen how Pope, in the adaptation of Chaucer's " Merchant's Tale," replaced the classical Plutos and Proserpines with fairies of the Shakespearean order. These delicate and imaginary beings still retained for Pope all their attractiveness. He has indeed referred the origin of his sylphs and gnomes to the Rosicrucian extravaganza of *Le Compte de Gabalis*, but Mr. Elwin contends with plausibility that their true origin is to be found in those arch-romanticists, Spenser and Shakespeare (EC 2. 127).

It is a point of significance that Pope's faith in this material was unshaken in spite of, or perhaps because of, its romantic nature and origin. Its appeal to him was so real that he deliberately ignored the advice of the foremost literary authority of the day, Addison, and this was done shortly after the invaluable approval that Addison had given to the *Essay on Criticism*; when he was respected as the foremost critic and Pope was hardly more than a young poet of promise; when the two were on the best of terms, before jealousies or misunderstandings had in any way weakened Pope's sincere respect for the judgment of his more experienced friend. Even the warning of Addison could not deter Pope from adding the machinery of the sylphs and gnomes to his " delicious trifle."

It would be difficult to imagine any great poet, save a neo-

[14] Accordingly, the poem satisfied romanticists like Hazlitt and DeQuincey. See Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Poets* (London, 1901), p. 96; DeQuincey, *Works* (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1862) 15. 116.

classicist, deliberately choosing, in the production of his *magnum opus,* to expend his talents on any extended work of translation. In the eighteenth century the situation does not seem so incongruous. Then the Ancients were venerated as never before or since; then it was folly to hope to surpass them; then no higher achievement was possible than that of successfully drawing their bow of Ulysses. To reveal adequately the beauties of the classic masters was not to prostitute the divine gifts of poetic inspiration. No one can doubt that Pope was influenced by and shared this attitude, and in so far as his decision to translate Homer was dictated by these considerations, the undertaking is a manifestation of the neo-classic spirit. But all too often our appraisal notes these forces and seeks no farther. There were other and different motives involved in Pope's decision.

First of all, in spite of the considerations noted above, Pope's inclinations were rather toward original composition than translation. In his last years he told Spence (Sp, p. 231), "What led me into [the translation of the *Iliad*], which was a work so much more laborious and less suited to my inclination, was purely the want of money. I had then none; not even to buy books." Then, although the task was rendered imperative by economic pressure, it was mitigated by reason of Pope's pronounced love for Homer. Homer "was the first author that made me catch the itch of poetry," he wrote to Broome (EC 8.37). The fascination survived his youthful days, for in 1708 he wrote to Bridges a eulogy that was later to form part of his preface to the translation (EC 6.12-13): ". . . the distinguishing excellences of Homer are . . . first in the manners . . . and then in that rapture and fire which carries you away with him with that wonderful force that no man who has a true poetical spirit is master of himself while he reads him."

But in spite of a deep-rooted, sincere, and indeed almost enthusiastic admiration for Homer (who was, it is well to remember, about the least "classic" of all the Ancients in the eighteenth-century sense of the word), Pope soon began to find the mantle of Homer a very uncomfortable garment. This tribute of love and veneration placed upon the altar of the Ancients was a splendid thing in contemplation, but in actuality it lost much of its attractiveness. Pope finally began to

relieve himself of a large part of the burden. Broome and Fenton were called to his assistance, and still another move of retrenchment was made by assigning to these assistants the less spirited and attractive portions. The irksomeness of the task is of course largely to be attributed to Pope's inadequate linguistic qualifications (there is something of paradox in our elevation of Pope to the dignity of arch representative of "classicism" when, because of his irregular education, he probably had a smaller first-hand knowledge of the Ancients than any other prominent poet of the period), but it is not rash to assume that the subordination of his own creativeness constituted part of the onus, that he began to find himself more than he had suspected a poetic individualist, impatient of the necessary creative restraint.

But let us turn from the conjectural to the definite. There can be no uncertainty attached to Pope's estimate of Homer. To Pope Homer is surpassingly great, and his greatness is not the greatness of polish, elegance, and restraint. Let us note a few of the words and phrases employed in the preface to the translation as they are applied to the enthusiastic endorsement of the original: extensive; copious; lively; strongly marked; affecting and transported; warm and sublime; full and animated; rapid and various; impetuosity; boundless overflow; boundless and irresistible; warmth of fancy; unequalled fire and rapture; vast comprehension; extent and fecundity of his imagination; strongest and most glowing imaginable; laid on boldly, and executed with rapidity; found out *living words*; vehement spirit; everything moves, everything lives, and is put in action.— These enthusiastic tributes leap at the reader from every paragraph, almost from every line.

There are other passages that give evidence that these tributes were bestowed with the full realization that the qualities they commend were in direct contrast to those usually exalted by the neo-classicists. We are told that "most critics are inclined to prefer a judicious and methodical genius to a great and fruitful one . . . because they find it easier for themselves to pursue their observations through an uniform and bounded walk of Art, than to comprehend the vast and various extent of Nature." [15] By this we are not only persuaded that Pope's

[15] *The Complete Poetical Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. Henry W. Boynton, "Cambridge edition," p. 251. This citation is from the preface to the *Iliad*.

preferences here lie beyond the neo-classic pale, but that he is aware that they are so isolated, and that in spite of this he still maintains them. He deliberately sets against the forces of correctness and polish those of fire and animation.

> Exact disposition, just thought, correct elocution, polished numbers, may have been found in a thousand; but this poetical fire, this *vivida vis animi*, in a very few. Even in works where all those are imperfect or neglected, this can overpower criticism, and make us admire even while we disapprove. Nay, where this appears, though attended with absurdities, it brightens all the rubbish about it, till we see nothing but its own splendour.[16]

Again:

> A cooler judgment may commit fewer faults, and be more approved in the eyes of one sort of critics: but that warmth of fancy will carry the loudest and most universal applauses, which holds the heart of a reader under the strongest enchantment.[17]

Here, once more, emerges the youthful Pope of Binfield, who read "with a very great eagerness and enthusiasm," "hunting after the stories in the several poets," following "everywhere as . . . fancy led . . . like a boy gathering flowers . . . just as they fall in his way"; here he exalts the hero of his youth because this hero could hold "the heart of a reader under the strongest enchantment."

The poetic drudgery of the Homer translation wrought in Pope its inevitable reaction. From the close confines of prolonged and laborious imitation he rushed headlong into a welter of uninhibited and emotional poetic indulgence. Part of this reaction may be seen in the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*. The opening lines of the poem present the eerie figure of a beckoning spirit with a bleeding bosom and a visionary sword:

> What beck'ning ghost, along the moon-light shade
> Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade?
> 'Tis she!—but why that bleeding bosom gor'd?
> Why dimly gleams the visionary sword?

Her offence, we learn, was an emotional one (l. 6):

> Is it, in heav'n, a crime to love too well?

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 251.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

The life of full and eager sensation and experience is given the benefit of a very favorable contrast (ll. 17-22):

> Most souls, 'tis true, but peep out once an age,
> Dull sullen pris'ners in the body's cage:
> Dim lights of life, that burn a length of years
> Useless, unseen, as lamps in sepulchres;
> Like Eastern kings a lazy state they keep,
> And, close confined to their own palace, sleep.

The strain now modulates to the pathetic, to which Pope was unusually sensitive, as we shall note hereafter. The cruel guardian of the fair unfortunate is directed to behold the effects of his cruelty (ll. 31-4):

> See on these ruby lips the trembling breath,
> These cheeks now fading at the blast of death;
> Cold is that breast which warmed the world before,
> And those love-darting eyes must roll no more.

The pathetic note persists in the remainder of the poem, as in the following lines (ll. 47-54):

> What can atone, oh ever-injured shade!
> Thy fate unpitied, and thy rites unpaid?
> No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear
> Pleased thy pale ghost, or graced thy mournful bier.
> By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,
> By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
> By foreign hands thy humble grave adorned,
> By strangers honoured, and by strangers mourned![18]

Eloisa to Abelard is another digression and reaction from the Homeric translation. It exhibits in a degree even more pronounced the characteristics noted in the *Elegy*. The spirit in which Pope approached the composition is given in a letter to Martha Blount (EC 9. 264): "The Epistle of Eloisa grows warm, and begins to have some breathings of the heart in it. . . ." Not only has Pope developed all the story's latent possibilities of pathos, but he has given the setting its proper atmosphere in a manner that would not disgrace the poets of the romantic school, and he has introduced many passages which, as Roscoe admits,[19] " are inconsistent with the established order

[18] Dr. Johnson emphasizes its romantic and anti-social content, in *Lives of the Poets*, ed. Birkbeck Hill, 3. 101.

[19] Quoted by Elwin, EC 2. 223.

and regulations of society. . . ." Bowles recognized the same tendency: "The inherent indelicacy of the subject is one objection to it, and who but must lament its immoral effect. . . ." [20]

The Gothic splendor and gloom of the convent is emphasized repeatedly, and a touch of the true romantic imagination is evident in such lines as the following (l. 21):

> Shrines! where their vigils pale-eyed virgins keep,

or (ll. 243-4),

> Where round some mould'ring tow'r pale ivy creeps,
> And low-browed rocks hang nodding o'er the deeps.

No extracts can do justice to the emotional content of the poem, for scarcely a line permits us to lose sight of the devout Eloisa, torn between the instinct of piety and of love, tormented with the memory of the tragic fate of her lover, and exalted by the recollection of her previous happiness. We may, however, note a few passages that "are inconsistent with the established order and regulations of society." No doubt Roscoe referred, among others, to the following (ll. 73-80, 87-94, and 230):

> How oft, when pressed to marriage, have I said,
> Curse on all laws but those which love had made!
> Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
> Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.
> Let wealth, let honour, wait the wedded dame,
> August her deed, and sacred be her fame;
> Before true passion all those views remove;
> Fame, wealth, and honour! what are you to love? . . .
>
> Not Cæsar's empress would I deign to prove;
> No, make me mistress to the man I love;
> If there be yet another name more free,
> More fond than mistress, make me that to thee.
> Oh! happy state! when souls each other draw,
> When love is liberty, and nature, law:
> All then is full, possessing and possessed,
> No craving void left aching in the breast. . . .
>
> How glowing guilt exalts the keen delight!

As did Pope, we may conclude the subject with this bit of poetic theory:

[20] Quoted by Elwin, EC 2. 222.

And sure if fate some future bard shall join
In sad similitude of griefs to mine,
Condemned whole years in absence to deplore,
And image charms he must behold no more;
Such if there be, who loves so long, so well;
Let him our sad, our tender story tell;
The well-sung woes will soothe my pensive ghost;
He best can paint them who shall feel them most.[21]

That emotional capacity is one of the prime qualifications of a successful poet was a conception somewhat foreign to Pope's age.

Influenced, no doubt, by the remarkable financial success of the *Iliad* translation, Pope undertook another commercial adventure, namely, the editing of the works of Shakespeare. Evidences of eighteenth-century admiration for this Elizabethan " child of Nature " have ceased to be surprising, but we should be guilty of neglect did we fail to note Pope's share in this stream of liberalism.

As did many another eighteenth-century critic of Shakespeare, Pope admires him and explains him on a basis that is entirely opposed to the current standards of conscious imitation and formal perfection. In his praise of Shakespeare Pope does not emphasize those passages that exemplify the virtues of careful imitation and minute and polished workmanship, although these might certainly have been found; some of his plays, for example, follow the unities rather closely. But instead of dwelling on these formal and theoretical beauties, Pope becomes enthusiastic over the intuition, spontaneity, and artlessness of the dramatist.

The poetry of Shakespear was inspiration indeed; he is not so much an imitator as an instrument of Nature; and it is not so just to say that he speaks from her as that she speaks through him.[22]

This is perfectly amazing, from a man of no education or experience in those great and public scenes of life which are usually the subject of his thoughts: so that he seems to have known the world by intuition, to have looked through human nature at one glance, and to be the only author that gives ground for a very new opinion, That the philosopher, and even the man of the world, may be *born*, as well as the poet.[23]

[21] Italics are mine.
[22] Preface to the *Works of Shakespeare*, EC 10. 535.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 536.

We must not let Pope's amazement at such intuition blind us to his unqualified insistence upon it and recognition of its happy effects. Spontaneity and artlessness are insisted upon just as vigorously, and in a connection that, from his childhood days, had always been an important one to Pope — the emotional.

> The *power* over our *Passions* was never possess'd in a more eminent degree, or displayed in so different instances. Yet all along there is seen no labour, no pains to raise them; no preparation to guide our guess to the effect, or be perceiv'd to lead toward it; but the heart swells, and the tears burst out, just at the proper places. We are surprised the moment we weep; and yet upon reflection find the passion so just, that we should be surprised if we had not wept, and wept at that very moment.[24]

Pope's summary reiterates the high praise previously given, extenuates the lack of formal perfection, and displays (what we have previously noted in connection with *Eloisa to Abelard*) a surprising preference for the Gothic style in architecture:

> I will conclude by saying of Shakespear, that with all his faults, and with all the irregularity of his *drama*, one may look upon his works, in comparison of those that are more finished and regular, as upon an ancient majestic piece of Gothic architecture, compared with a neat modern building: the latter is more elegant and glaring, but the former is more strong and more solemn. It must be allowed, that in one of these there are materials enough to make many of the other. It has much the greater variety, and much the nobler apartments; though we are often conducted to them by dark, odd, and uncouth passages. Nor does the whole fail to strike us with greater reverence, though many of the parts are childish, ill-placed, and unequal to its grandeur.[25]

The Homeric and Shakespearean projects extended to 1725, and in them we may see the last substantial embodiment of poetic, critical, and emotional unconventionality in the works of Pope that were formally set before the public. The doctrines of classicism had now been thoroughly assimilated; the established doctrines had, in approximate entirety, been espoused; and the earlier ideals and inclinations, while still surviving, were kept strictly in the background. Pope was, indeed, still to castigate dull formalists and dull formalism in his "Bathos" and in the *Dunciad;* but, after all, the castigation, where personalities did not enter, was intended for the dullness rather

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 535. [25] *Ibid.*, p. 549.

than the formalism. Pope had now enjoyed a long and congenial acquaintance with Swift, the master satirist, and in 1723 the banished " philosopher," Bolingbroke, was permitted to return to England. The latter's influence on Pope was immediate and profound. Consequently, Pope's poetry was henceforth confined to the satiric, the moral, and the philosophic. To trace the survival of his earlier and less " classic " tendencies, it is necessary to ignore his public literary appearances, and to delve into the informality of his correspondence and conversations.

It should be remembered that the poets to whom Pope gave his most enthusiastic praise and who pleased him most were, with scarcely an exception, those who were least concerned with the classic virtues. The list reads as follows: Homer, Statius, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and Dryden. Only the last of these was intimately connected with eighteenth-century ideals of correctness and regularity. Virgil was indeed mentioned once or twice with respect, but Pope was remarkably economical in the singing of his praises.

Of the poetic favorites mentioned, it is clear that all save perhaps Shakespeare and Milton were boyhood favorites, and a high regard for these poets was cherished as early as 1711, when Pope was only twenty-three. In this year he wrote to Caryll (EC 6. 145): ". . . I keep the pictures of Dryden, Milton, Shakespeare, &c., in my chamber, round about me, that the constant remembrance of them may keep me always humble." This admiration was probably no recently acquired thing, and the praise that Pope bestowed on Shakespeare nearly fifteen years later must trace its origin back through this period to the literary adventures of his undisciplined boyhood readings. The same may be said in regard to Milton. The seemingly complete espousal of classicism did not eradicate high approval of the " organ voice of England." About 1735 Spence quotes (Sp, p. 129) Pope to the effect that " it is easy to mark out the general course of our poetry. Chaucer, Spenser, Milton,[26] and Dryden, are the great landmarks for it."

Pope's attachment to his early loves, Chaucer and Spenser,

[26] A thorough presentation of Pope's amazing familiarity with the works of Milton may be found in R. D. Haven's *Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1922), pp. 112 ff.

was no less pronounced. About 1728 he told Spence, "I read Chaucer still with as much pleasure as almost any of our poets. He is a master of manners, of description, and *the first tale-teller in the true enlivened natural way*." [27] It is evident that Pope still retained his boyhood inclination to revel in the story. About the same time he criticized Addison for his contemptuous remarks on Chaucer: [28] "Thus his character of Chaucer is diametrically opposite to the truth. . . . The character he gives of Spenser [29] is false too. . . ." (Sp, pp. 37-8).

Chaucer was still fresh in Pope's memory just a few weeks before his death. On April 10, 1744, in a letter to Lord Orrery, he paraphrased a couplet from the "Knight's Tale" as a suggested epitaph for a faithful dog (EC 8.518), and as a final mark of his esteem, we may note that Spence had seen "of Mr. Pope's drawing, a grave old Chaucer, from Occleve" (Sp, p. 255).

John Hughes, no doubt aware of Pope's partiality for Spenser, apparently sent him a set of his new edition of that poet. At all events, Pope replied, in part, as follows (EC 10.120): "The present you make me is of the most agreeable nature imaginable, for Spenser has ever been a favourite poet to me: he is like a mistress, whose faults we see, but love her with them all." This, indeed, expresses Pope's real attitude toward his old favorites. Classicism revealed their "faults," but he loved them in spite of their imperfections. Spenser was still fresh in the mind of Pope in 1728, for he at first designed for his motto to the *Dunciad* a stanza from the *Faerie Queene* (Sp, p. 224), and his familiarity certainly survived until 1743-1744 when the particular stanza was recited or indicated to Spence. As if to dispel any doubt about his continued allegiance, in the next recorded anecdote Pope is quoted as follows (Sp, pp. 224-5):

> After reading a canto of Spenser two or three days ago to an old lady, between seventy and eighty years of age, she said that I had been showing her a gallery of pictures.—I don't know how it is, but she said very right: there is something in Spenser that pleases one as strongly in one's old age, as it did in one's youth. I read the Faerie Queene, when I was about twelve, with infinite delight; and I think it gave me as much, when I read it over about a year or two ago.

[27] SP, p. 15. Italics are mine.
[28] See *An Account of the Greatest English Poets*, ll. 11-16.
[29] *Ibid.*, ll. 17-26.

Typical neo-classic self-sufficiency was evidently an attitude that was entirely unknown to Pope. Spence has recorded one of his discussions in which he expressed opinions on Elizabethan and pre-Restoration poets (pp. 16-17). The list of poets that pass in review is amazing. Golding, Phaer, Carew, Waller, Cowley, Crashaw, Herbert, Donne, Drayton, and Beaumont are names that we may read in this connection without great surprise, but wonder grows when the discussion is extended to include Goffe, Mennis, Thomas Stanley, Sackville, Randolph, Kyd, Webster, Massinger, Marston, Sylvester, Cartwright, Bishop Corbet and Sam Daniel. Such a list intimates an acquaintance with earlier poetry that is far from superficial. It may indeed be doubted if any of the great romantic poets, Coleridge perhaps excepted, were, in spite of their veneration for the Elizabethans, capable of passing judgment on half of the poets mentioned by Pope. This does not bespeak the contempt and indifference for the older poets that an arch-classicist should have had.

Pope's attitude toward Ben Jonson, the patron saint of classicism, indicates in which direction his literary tastes really lay. The case of Pope and Jonson is very similar to that of Pope and Virgil. Pope mentions the latter only when he cannot well avoid it. He speaks of him respectfully, but generally, as when he contrasts him with Homer in the preface to the *Iliad* translation, one can detect a lack of enthusiasm. Similarly, when Pope speaks of Ben Jonson for publication, which is indeed seldom, no disrespect is expressed, but in conversation with Spence (p. 7) the non-commital attitude is abandoned, and sincere and vigorous judgment issues forth: "What trash are *his* works taken all together."

The restrictions imposed by the classic theory that Pope had embraced were not void of their irritations, and occasionally they inspired rebellions. Pope had deliberately chosen the moral, satiric, and philosophic literary forms, but he wrote with a hint of regret to Swift: "what I gain on the side of philosophy, I lose on the side of poetry: the flowers are gone, when the fruits begin to ripen, and the fruits will never ripen perfectly." [30] The satiric form had been fully accepted and culti-

[30] Pope to Swift, Mar. 25, 1736, EC 7. 342.

vated by Pope, but he could never bring himself to subscribe to the classic ideal of general satire.

But general satire in times of general vice has no force and is no punishment: people have ceased to be ashamed of it when so many are joined with them; and it is only by hunting one or two from the herd that any examples can be made. If a man writ all his life against the collective body of the banditti, or against lawyers, would it do the least good, or lessen the body? [31]

And again:

To reform and not to chastise, I am afraid is impossible; and that the best precepts, as well as the best laws, would prove of small use, if there were no examples to enforce them. To attack vices in the abstract, without touching persons, may be safe fighting indeed, but it is fighting with shadows. General propositions are obscure, misty, and uncertain, compared with plain, full, and home examples. Precepts only apply to our reason, which in most men is but weak: examples are pictures, and strike the senses, nay, raise the passions, and call in those, the strongest and most general of all motives, to the aid of reformation.[32]

In truth, Pope's inherent conception of the poet and of poetry was, both in his youth and in his maturity, of an entirely different order from that of rigid classicism. In Pope's ideals the artist and his art were spontaneous products of nature; the artist excelled by reason of his imagination; he secured his effects by rough and masterful strokes, neglectful of art and polished perfection; he broke through outworn forms by the strength of his genius; and he held his readers in admiring subjection by stirring their emotions. Witness the following selections:

. . . should I describe the many draughts, elevations, profiles, perspective, &c., of every palace and garden proposed, intended, and happily raised, by the strength of that faculty wherein all great geniuses excel, imagination.[33]

A genius has the intuitive faculty . . .[34]

I shall indeed . . . be highly pleased to see the great Czar of Muscovy in this light, drawn by himself, like an ancient master, in rough strokes, without heightening or shadowing. What a satis-

[31] Pope to Arbuthnot, Aug. 2, 1734, EC 7. 480.
[32] Pope to Arbuthnot, July 26, 1734, EC 7. 481-2.
[33] Pope to Jervas, Dec. 12, 1718, EC 8. 26-7.
[34] Pope to Swift, Aug. 17, 1736, EC 7. 346.

faction to behold that perfect likeness, without art, affectation, or even the gloss of colouring, with a noble neglect of all that finishing and smoothing, which any other hand would have been obliged to bestow on so principal a figure! [35]

I have often wished to live to see the day when prologues and epilogues should be no more. I wish a great genius would break through the silly, useless formality. But at least I would have one try, to leave the audience *full* of the *effects* of a good tragedy, without an epilogue.[36]

To say truth, I think any common reader judges these of the material part, as well as the most learned, that is, of the moving the Passions, and you'll agree with me, that if a writer does not move them, there is no Art to teach him.[37]

One of the major surprises encountered in a thorough study of Pope is his remarkable lack of insistence upon the fundamentals of neo-classic theory. Nearly all his positive utterances on matters of theory [38] are of a piece with those just noted. We should not forget, of course, that he never fails to notice a lack of correctness, but neither should we overlook the fact that " genius," " fire," etc., are always adjudged ample restitution for such shortcomings; in fact, almost never are we permitted to doubt that these are the real and essential virtues. There seems to be but one explanation for this attitude. It is the deliberate and successful attempt of Pope to adapt his practice to the accepted expression of the literary spirit of the age. It may once again be remarked that this indicates his surprising adaptability rather than his natural conformity.

The " moving the Passions," mentioned in the last quotation, was the one quality above all others that Pope seemed to value, and particularly the passions stirred by " the pathetick." This attitude, as do so many others, dates back to the period of his boyhood, when as the favorite of his parents his emotional capacity was stimulated by their devotion. Of Otway's tragedies Pope notes (Sp, p. 162): " Otway has written but two tragedies, out of six, that are pathetic. — I believe he did it

[35] Pope to Aaron Hill, 1726, EC 10. 6.

[36] Pope to Hill, Sept. 12, 1738, EC 10. 70.

[37] Pope to Hill, Nov. 1 [1729?], EC 10. 80.

[38] The *Essay on Criticism* is of course an exception, but this was, as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu remarked, with some exaggeration but considerable justice, " stolen from the ancients."

without much design; as Lillo has done in his Barnwell. — 'Tis a talent of nature, rather than an effect of judgment, to write so movingly." To Spence he said (Sp, p. 197):

I always was particularly struck with that passage in Homer, where he makes Priam's grief for the loss of Hector, break out into anger against his attendants and sons; and could never read it without weeping for the distress of that unfortunate old prince.

Spence adds in comment that "he read it then; and was interrupted by his tears." Spence also records the testimony of Martha Blount (p. 197): "I have often seen him weep, in reading very tender and melancholy passages."

Another indication of Pope's early literary diet and his consequent restiveness under the restrictions of a chaste and ordered literary code may be seen in his partiality for the fanciful and the oriental. The first instance of this disposition is to be found in number sixty-one of the *Guardian*, where Pope concludes his essay by appending "one of the Persian fables of Pilpay." In 1720 he forwarded for the perusal and judgment of Dr. Atterbury a collection of oriental tales. The doctor damned them roundly,[39] and so far as is known Pope was properly disciplined. We may see his intentions in letters of a later date. To Mrs. Judith Cowper he wrote:

I could wish you tried something in the descriptive way on any subject you please, mixed with vision and moral; like pieces of the old Provençal poets, which abound with fancy, and are the most amusing scenes in nature. There are three or four of this kind in Chaucer admirable: "the Flower and the Leaf" every body has been delighted with.

I have long had an inclination to tell a fairy tale, the more wild and exotic the better; therefore a *vision*, which is confined to no rules of probability, will take in all the variety and luxuriancy of description you will; provided there be an *apparent* moral to it. I think, one or two of the Persian tales would give one hints for such an invention. . . .[40]

This intention was later confirmed in a conversation with Spence (Sp, pp. 105-6):

After reading the Persian Tales (and I had been reading Dry-

[39] See letter to Atterbury, Sept. 23, 1720, EC 9. 19-20. The following letter contains Atterbury's criticism.

[40] Letter to Mrs. Judith Cowper, Sept. 26, 1723, EC 9. 431-2. Italics in "apparent" are mine.

den's Fables just before them), I had some thought of writing a Persian fable; in which I should have given a full loose to description and imagination. It would have been a very wild thing, if I had executed it; but might not have been unentertaining.

We have seen how one of Pope's earliest literary efforts found expression in the epic form. These adventures of Alcander, opening " under water with a description of the Court of Neptune " (Sp, p. 19) and presenting the hero as possessed of all the virtues of courage and suffering, expressed crudely Pope's fondness for the bold, the masterful, and the moving — a fondness that never deserted him — and the logical form for the expression of these qualities was, of course, the epic, and Pope's epic intentions were likewise never to desert him. The Alcander essay was finally destroyed, after its condemnation by Dr. Atterbury, " though not without some regret " (Sp, p. 149). He later told Spence (p. 196): " I should certainly have written an Epic Poem, if I had not engaged in the translation of Homer "; and at the height of his moral and philosophic tendencies he intended his *Essay on Man* and the *Moral Essays* to form part of a projected epic, which must indeed have been a far cry from his "Alcander," but the epic urge was finally to revert to something resembling its earlier nature. The last days of Pope's life found him projecting still another epic, on the settlement of Britain by Brutus. A condensed version of its plan was given to Spence (p. 218), and a more complete outline was made public by Ruffhead. The latter version is in substantial agreement with that of Spence, but it is to be noted that Pope intended to desert the heroic couplet in favor of blank verse, of which Spence takes no note.[41]

Thus, Pope had at last determined to indulge his epic proclivities and publicly desert for the idiom of Milton the established metrical standard of neo-classicism, the heroic couplet. It is to be regretted that the work was never completed.

University of Richmond

[41] E. D. Snyder, " Pope's Blank Verse Epic," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 18. 580 ff.

VITA

Samuel W. Stevenson was born October 24, 1898, in Mooresville, North Carolina. He attended the public schools of this town until 1917, when he entered the University of North Carolina. He was graduated from that institution in 1921 with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. During the next few years he held several business positions. He began his graduate study at The Johns Hopkins University in 1928, attending the University of Chicago summer session in that year. Since that time he has been in continuous residence at The Johns Hopkins University, from which institution he received the degree of Master of Arts in 1930.